

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 OMB-01 DRC-01 /094 W

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P R 161417Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0652

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 0820

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, JO

SUBJECT: KING HUSSEIN'S RESPONSE TO ZARQA INCIDENT

1. SUMMARY: KING HUSSEIN HAS PERFORMED RUSH OF PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND OFFICIAL ACTS IN PAST NINE DAYS DESIGNED TO DEFUSE POLITICAL SITUATION CREATED BY FEB 3-5 ZARQA MILITARY PROTEST. END SUMMARY.
2. PUBLIC APPEARANCES INCLUDED VISITS TO VIRTUALLY ALL MILITARY UNITS, SPEECH TO MILITARY OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN AND PERSONAL FIRING AT ARMY DEMONSTRATION OF NEW TOW MISSILE RECENTLY FURNISHED BY USG.
3. MOST NOTEWORTHY PUBLIC APPEARANCE WAS CLOSED SESSION SPEECH ON FEB 13 TO PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS AND OTHER NOTABLES FOLLOWED BY FEB 14 RADIO TALK TO NATION ON SAME THEMES. (BOTH CARRIED FBIS.)
4. KING ONLY MADE OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO ZARQA INCIDENT AND ASSURED AUDIENCE THAT SITUATION RE JORDAN ARMY IS SOUND AND
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THAT ARMY LOYALTY IS ABOVE SUSPICION. IN OBVIOUS REFERENCE

TO ARMY COMPLAINTS OVER INADEQUATE SALARIES, KING STATED HE "AHEAD" OF ARMY IN LOOKING AFTER ITS WELFARE AND POINTED OUT

THAT ARMY PERSONNEL AND FAMILIES FOR INSTANCE RECEIVE FREE MEDICAL TREATMENT. ON OTHER OCCASIONS THIS WEEK KING MENTIONED OTHER MILITARY BENEFITS (CUSTOMS FREE MILITARY PXS AND FREE FOOD) AND RELATIVE PROSPERITY OF JORDANIAN MILITARY VIS A VIS OTHER ARMIES.

5. KING RESPONDED TO PUBLIC DISCONTENT OVER RISING COST OF LIVING BY (1) INDICATING INFLATION IS WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON; (2) POINTING OUT HEAVY JORDANIAN FOOD SUBSIDIES ALREADY IN EXISTENCE; (3) THREATENING ANY MONOPOLISTS WITH SEVERE PUNISHMENT; AND (4) ANNOUNCING CREATION OF A MINISTRY OF PROVISIONS, DESIGNED TO ENSURE ADEQUATE SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AT REASONABLE PRICES.

6. KING MADE NO REFERENCE IN FEB 13 SPEECH OF CRITICISMS OF PM RIFAI AND CHIEF OF STAFF BIN SHAKER EXCEPT TO INDICATE HE WOULD NOT PERMIT "CHARACTER ASSASSINATION OF INDIVIDUALS". KING APPARENTLY CHOSE TO ADDRESS BASIC ECONOMIC GRIEVANCES PERSONALLY RATHER THAN ACCEDE TO DEMANDS FOR REPLACEMENT OF PM AND COS AS MEANS OF CORRECTING SITUATION. MEANWHILE, KING HAS MADE NO PUBLIC REFERENCE TO DISCIPLINING ANY DISOBEDIENT ARMY PERSONNEL, ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THAT INVESTIGATIONS COMMISSION HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED.

7. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT KING HUSSEIN'S SUPER-ACTIVE PROGRAM LAST WEEK SIGNIFICANTLY EASED LOCAL SITUATION. FACT OF WIDESPREAD CONSULTATIONS WITH ARMY UNITS (FIRST IN YEAR) AND PUBLIC SPEECHES AND USEFUL RESULT MERELY BY SHOWING KING AWARE OF AND WILLING TO FACE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. FURTHERMORE, SPEEDY CONCRETE MEASURES (MILITARY PAY RAISE, FOOD AND PRICE CONTROLS, FORMATION OF MINISTRY AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES TO MEET SPECIAL COMPLAINTS) SHOWED GOJ CAPABLE OF ACTION TO MEET IF NOT TOTALLY SOLVE GRIEVANCES.
GRAHAM

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